



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/drought-strikes-ethiopia-again-here%E2%80%99s-what-makes-one-different>

## Drought Strikes Ethiopia Again. Here's What Makes This One Different



Morgana Wingard

Feed the Future has helped Ethiopian farmers like Dhaki Wako Baneta connect to reliable markets. With a higher income from selling milk, she's able to save during the rainy season so she is more resilient during the drought season.

*As a foreign service officer at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), I've worked in a variety of countries throughout my career, including Ethiopia, where I learned first-hand how recurrent drought pushes people further and further into poverty. And, having worked with the U.S. Government's Feed the Future initiative for the past 6 years, I've also had the opportunity to see just how far the country has come in recent years in its development.*

Between 2011-2014, Ethiopia reduced child stunting by nine percent. Now, livestock herders are earning more. Ethiopian farmers have boosted their maize and wheat yields to feed more people and make more income to rise out of poverty. The United States has supported Ethiopians to achieve these advances.

As Ethiopia faces one of its worst droughts in decades, many of these gains are being put to the test. And, this drought is different from those past:

- The current El Niño weather event has compounded the **drought's severity and scale**, outstripping Ethiopia's capacity to cope on its own and leaving an additional 10.2 million people in need of emergency food assistance and many farmers without seed to grow more.

- Ethiopia is **more prepared than ever** to face such a crisis, thanks to leadership of the Government of Ethiopia and its commitment to improving resilience, food security and nutrition—which we’ve supported through efforts like the Feed the Future initiative.

## Rapid Response

USAID’s response is also different from those in the past. We’re responding sooner rather than later to prevent a worse emergency and to help Ethiopia protect its hard-won development gains. What’s more, we’re responding with the full force and tools of USAID. Our humanitarian efforts are providing immediate food and water.

Our development efforts—which benefit from already being on-the-ground and, in the case of Ethiopia, being pre-programmed with built-in emergency response tools when needed—are adapting to help families prevent income loss and meet their needs while maintaining assets like livestock instead of offloading them at rock-bottom prices for quick cash. And, when families do need to offload cattle, that livestock traders are able to offer them a decent price.

We’re also helping farming families in drought-affected areas of Ethiopia get the seed they need to grow more food. Poor rainfall last year has left many farmers without seed, so USAID announced last week that we are rapidly expanding an existing partnership with the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and the Ethiopian government to [provide urgently-needed seed](#) to drought-affected maize and wheat farmers. USAID’s nearly \$4 million investment in this effort leverages an additional \$1.5 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to help purchase seed and deliver it to more than 226,000 of the hardest-hit households—comprising 1.35 million people—as the current planting season ends and the next begins.

Through pre-existing Feed the Future projects in Ethiopia, CIMMYT has established strong partnerships with seed growers and farmers in Ethiopia and will purchase most of the emergency seed from these sources, which include public and private seed companies, farmer cooperatives, and seed associations.

This effort also makes newer, more disease-resistant wheat varieties and nutritionally-enhanced and drought-tolerant maize varieties available to farmers. These conventionally bred varieties reflect years of USAID investment and CIMMYT’s work to develop improved seed for Ethiopia and are a complement to the existing local markets.

## Farmers Help Farmers

The drought has—so far—had less of a negative impact in the areas where Feed the Future programs are located. Farmers, organizations, and systems in these areas are also stronger, having benefited from Feed the Future activities to strengthen agriculture systems. These areas are proving critical to Ethiopia’s own response to crisis within its borders.

The Ethiopian government and the World Food Program (WFP) are buying maize from farmers and farmers’ groups, who have a greater supply to offer thanks to Feed the Future’s investments. This surplus will help feed Ethiopians in areas of need during the current drought. Additionally, farmers’ groups supported by Feed the Future are supplying maize to the Ethiopian government and regional governments, who will distribute it to families in need in drought-affected areas.

Partnership plays an important role. A USAID and DuPont Pioneer partnership has helped smallholder maize farmers increase their yields of improved maize varieties with heartier seeds and optimal growing techniques. Farmers’ groups in Ethiopia are currently sourcing maize from these farmers to sell to the WFP for distribution to drought-affected areas in the country.

We remain committed to helping Ethiopia build local capacity for lasting food security. Time is of the essence, and even as we act now to meet immediate needs, we must not lose sight of the fact that investing in long-term food security—which the U.S. Government supports through efforts like Feed the Future—makes a difference.

Our development efforts help countries grow stronger, making them better able to respond to, mitigate, and recover from disasters when they happen. And, as we’re seeing in Ethiopia, they can give us a springboard from which to rapidly respond, with our partners, to help stop a bad situation from getting worse.

*This post originally [appeared](#) as a guest commentary on the Chicago Council for Global Affairs' *Global Food for Thought* blog.*

## Learn More

- [Read the story](#) of the Ethiopian farmer featured in the photo above
- [Read USAID's press release](#) on new measures to respond to the Ethiopia drought
- [View a press briefing](#) on USAID's response to the Ethiopia drought
- [Explore Feed the Future's work](#) in Ethiopia and the results we've achieved together